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ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE OF SASKATCHEWAN



HON. WALTER SCOTT

ADDRESS

To the People of Saskatchewan

Fellow Electors:

On August 21st I took the liberty of addressing you a message upon the great question then before the country for settlement: the question whether the producers of Canada should accept or reject the proposed free access for their products to the American market and a reduction in the amount of customs duties payable on agricultural implements coming from the United States. I felt authorized to take this step mainly by the fact that on March 8th last the representatives of our people in the Provincial Legislature, of which I am the leader, realizing the importance for Saskatchewan of the proposed trade arrangement, unanimously passed a resolution in favor of its adoption by the Parliament of the Dominion.

On September 21st this issue was decided in the negative by the electors of Canada. The smoke of battle has now cleared away and it is time for the people of Saskatchewan to come to a full appreciation of the situation created by the result of the general election. In view of my pre-election address to the people of the Province and the splendid response which was given to the call in favor of the proposed trade arrangement, I think it incumbent upon me to say a word upon the present position of affairs.

The Saskatchewan Grain Growers and farmers generally have asked in most emphatic manner for larger markets and cheaper agricultural implements. Their legitimate desires cannot be fulfilled for the present because the majority of the people of Canada have decided otherwise. The opening up of larger markets meant increased population, better prices for farm products, competition in freight rates, etc., and, as one of the natural results of all these things, an increase in value of farm lands. These benefits are for the time being denied to us. Nor are our farmers the only ones interested. I do not hesitate to say that the cities and towns in Saskatchewan are dependent for their growth and development upon the prosperity of the farming country tributary to them, and that they also would have profited by the advantages offered to the farmers through the opening up of new markets. Therefore the verdict of September 21st is full of interest for the people of our cities and towns.

One effect of the failure of the trade agreement became strikingly plain on September 22nd, when the Winnipeg price of wheat fell two cents and the Minneapolis price rose five cents. The morning following the election was also marked by a rise of 13 points in Ogilvie Milling Company shares. Why? Because the triumph of restriction secures to the big millers their raw material, wheat, at less than its value, and for their finished product, flour, a price beyond its value. Reciprocity's defeat did not add to the value of Canadian farm lands or town real estate. The lowering of farm machinery duties provided by the trade agreement, while not great, would have meant a saving to Western Canadian farmers of \$1,000,000 a year according to the Winnipeg agent of a large United States firm who declared that his Company were "prepared in the event of the adoption of the Reciprocity pact to reduce our prices to farmers

\$5 on every harvester, \$3 on every mower, \$1.50 on every rake, \$5 on every seeder, \$5 on every American wagon, and other things in about the same ratio. What my Company will do, my competitors will be obliged to do also." An extensive rancher at Macleod, Alta., states that upon his 1911 output he would have profited \$21,000 by freedom to sell in Chicago.

In view of all these facts there can be no doubt that the feeling created throughout the Province by the result of the recent election must be one of keen disappointment. There is even danger that this feeling may become one of deep resentment as the days go by and the meaning of the defeat is more and more experienced. This season we will have an enormous quantity of damaged grain to dispose of. The home market will quickly be glutted and the Old Country market does not profitably absorb coarse or damaged grains. The lack of the neighboring United States markets cannot fail to be severely felt. Furthermore it seems now all too plain that Trust, Combine and Monopoly in the United States joined with Trust, Combine and Monopoly in Canada to furnish the sinews of war necessary to defeat the demands of the Western farmers. Can anything be more ironically outrageous than a "loyalty-to-the-British-connection" campaign in Canada financed by the Big Interests of the United States? Yet, such is the spectacle we have just witnessed. Such is the infamous deception to which the people of Canada have been subjected.

Then apparently unaccountable events occurred during the campaign in Saskatchewan which aggravate the situation. I have already referred to the unanimous resolution in favor of the trade arrangement passed by our Provincial Legislature on March 8, 1911. It yet remains to be ascertained why Mr. Haultain, the leader of the Opposition, who spoke and voted in favor of this resolution and did all in his power to assist in making it unanimous, suddenly changed his ground during the last fortnight of the campaign and threw himself into the fight against the case of the farmers of Saskatchewan. I venture to assert that never in the history of Canada was a better cause deserted in a more ignominious and humiliating manner by the leader of a political party. I deem it a humiliation for the Legislature of Saskatchewan to witness its unanimous pronouncement thus lightly cast aside by one of its leading members who has not even deigned as yet to give any serious reason for his extraordinary conduct. Mr. Haultain's betrayal of the people's cause had no great effect in Saskatchewan; on the contrary, the constituency of Qu'Appelle to which he devoted his attention elected a Liberal over the sitting Conservative member. But in Eastern Canada the effect was different. There Mr. Haultain's turn-over was hailed as a token that a considerable portion of the people of Saskatchewan (the Province most concerned in the question at issue) had likewise undergone a change of heart, and this doubtless had something to do with the result at the polls.

The citizens of Saskatchewan generally, and more particularly the farmers of the Province, have therefore just cause for disappointment and perhaps even resentment. It is at this moment that I deem it my duty as the Premier of the Province to address a word of hope and encouragement to its people. In the first place I must lay stress upon the fact that the duty of Saskatchewan now, as a unit in the Canadian Confederation, is to accept the will of the majority and to banish all feelings of rancor towards any other Province or Provinces. But the acceptance of the will of the majority in a friendly spirit does not by any means imply a renunciation of the cause which we feel is just. It is still our right and our duty to continue the struggle for these things which mean so much to us until we have converted the majority to our

way of thinking. And we can depend upon it that this conversion will take place whenever the facts of our case, so riddled with all the false issues maliciously woven around them during the recent campaign, are clearly understood by the people of Canada.

I congratulate our people on the splendid manner in which they supported at the polls the demands they had previously made through other channels for new markets, cheaper agricultural implements, and competition (and consequent reduction) in freight rates.

I would point out to them that the need of additional markets will continue to make itself felt more and more as time goes on and that the demand for such markets must ultimately be complied with.

I would further point out that the almost unanimous voice of Saskatchewan has already emphasized the need of tariff reduction upon agricultural implements and this reduction cannot now be long denied the farmers of the country.

I would moreover point out that even amongst those who opposed the reciprocal pact much has been said in favor of that other great measure of tariff reduction created by the Liberal party in Canada and known as the British Preference, and that if sufficient pressure is brought to bear upon the new Government at Ottawa it may find itself compelled to increase the British Preference.

Therefore, I assert that as a result of the recent campaign the people of Saskatchewan should not admit permanent defeat but should unite their efforts to wrest from the Government of Canada those three great benefits: a new market for their produce, cheaper agricultural implements and an increase in the British Preference.

Time was when as a member for a constituency of the North-West Territories in the Federal Parliament it was my duty and my privilege to take part in the struggle of the farmers of the West against Monopoly and Special Interests. I think that without overstepping the bounds of modesty I may be permitted to point to The Manitoba Grain Act and to the appreciable curtailment of the Canadian Pacific Railway Monopoly as some evidence of the, at least, partial, success of my efforts and of the efforts of my associates.

Under the conditions now confronting the people of Saskatchewan I realize that if my former position as a member of Parliament imposed serious duties upon me in connection with the just claims of the West, I am now, as Leader of the Provincial Government and of the Liberal party in Saskatchewan, more than ever bound to assume a share of the responsibility for carrying on the battle for Western rights. And when I speak of Western rights I mean those demands of our people which are not designed for the benefit of the West alone, but which by benefiting the West cannot fail to be of advantage to the whole of Canada.

Therefore, on behalf of myself and of the Government and of the Liberal Party in Saskatchewan, I would ask the people of the Province not to be dismayed by present defeat but to prepare for a renewal of the struggle for those measures which will bestow upon us the advantages which Saskatchewan most urgently requires: access for our farmers to their nearest and most natural market, an increase in the British Preference, and a substantial reduction of the duty on agricultural implements.

Respectfully yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

Regina, November 2, 1911.

ARCHIVES OF SASKATCHEWAN